

worst polluters in the world have been the socialist nations, because their economies do not generate enough income to do good things for the environment, and that private property is almost always better cared for than public property and at a much lower cost.

ELECTION REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, last week, I announced the introduction of a resolution calling on Congress to enact meaningful election reform legislation.

Today, I am proud to introduce another measure on election reform and to announce an important voting technology demonstration I am sponsoring tomorrow with my former secretary of state colleagues who are presently now in the House and the Senate.

I am pleased to introduce legislation today to improve the voting process for millions of elderly Americans and persons with disabilities.

In every election year, many of these people stay at home, stay away from the polls, not from apathy but from concern about their ability to cast a vote independently. The elderly and visually impaired may not be able to decipher small print or confusing ballots, and people in wheelchairs may have difficulty maneuvering in older voting booths.

Unfortunately, this problem is pervasive throughout the United States. With nearly one in five Americans having some level of disability and approximately 35 million Americans over the age of 65, we must act now to ensure that our voting system is accessible to all Americans.

To ensure that Americans are not discouraged from voting because of outdated voting equipment and inaccessible voting places, I am introducing the Voting Opportunity through Technology and Education, or VOTE, Act. This measure would require the Federal Election Commission to establish voluntary accessibility and ease-of-use standards for polling places in voting equipment.

In 1984, Congress passed the Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act. This legislation required that all polling places in the United States be made accessible to the elderly and the disabled, but provided the FEC with little enforcement power. With the establishment of the new accessibility and ease-of-use standards in my VOTE Act, the FEC would be able to provide secretaries of state and election administrators with more information and support services to help them comply with accessible laws.

Additionally, the voting technology industry could use these standards to ensure that their products may be correctly used by all Americans at the

polls. Finally, the VOTE Act would provide grants to States so that they may improve their voting systems and educate poll workers and voters about the availability and benefits of these new technologies.

Mr. Speaker, I know first-hand how modern voting systems can increase voter turnout and improve accuracy. As a secretary of state for the State of Rhode Island, I was the chief architect of a plan to upgrade the State's voting system and equipment. The replacement of outdated lever machines with optical scan equipment and Braille and tactile ballots helped increase voter turnout and significantly reduced chances of error.

To highlight this equipment, as well as other voting technologies now available, I am joining former secretaries of state now in Congress, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN), in hosting the voting technology demonstration on Thursday, March 22. There we will address our own work at the State level to improve voting accountability and accuracy and demonstrate the various forms of election equipment, including punchcard ballot, optical scan and direct recording electronic systems.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to attend this educational event, as it will help prepare us for a nationwide discussion on election reform. Additionally, I ask that my colleagues join me in supporting this VOTE Act to make voting one of the greatest expressions of civic participation available on an equal basis to all Americans.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

REINTRODUCTION OF CHILD HANDGUN INJURY PREVENTION ACT, H.R. 1014

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. CARSON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, we continue to observe school shootings, and I am concerned that we have yet to pass strong gun safety legislation.

Despite recent polls by CBS and the New York Times which suggest that 70

percent of American people favor stricter handgun laws, Congress continues to ignore the public's concerns.

January 10, in Ventura County, California, a 17-year-old student held a classmate at gunpoint during the school's lunch break. The gunman was fatally wounded by police.

January 12, 2001, in my district, Indianapolis, Indiana, a 4-year-old boy shot himself with a pistol he found in his mother's pocketbook.

February 7, 2001 in Dallas, Texas, a 14-year-old boy fired a gun in the direction of classmates while on school grounds.

March 6, in Santee, California, a 15-year-old boy took a .22-caliber long-barrel revolver from his father's locked collection of weapons and killed two schoolmates, while injuring 13 others.

March 7, this year, Williamsburg, Pennsylvania, a 14-year-old girl shot a female classmate in the shoulder in the cafeteria of a parochial school.

March 7, Prince County Georges, Maryland, a 14-year-old boy shot and wounded another teenager outside Largo Senior High School.

From 1987 to 1996, nearly 2,200 American children, 14 years of age and younger, died from unintentional shootings. What are we waiting for? We must not allow these tragedies to become an everyday part of American life. We must not be apathetic.

While firearm fatalities cost America more money than any of the other four leading causes of death, guns are the only consumer product in America, except tobacco, which are exempt from health care and safety regulations. Sadly, guns continue to be exempt from Federal oversight, and consumer protection laws continue to be tougher on toy guns than on real guns.

The history of consumer product regulation teaches us that significant numbers of death and illnesses can be preserved when health and safety regulations exist. The Poison Prevention Packaging Act requires child-resistant packaging. The Consumer Federation of America estimates that more than 700 children have avoided accidental poisonings. Also, the introduction of sleep wear and toy standards have saved children's lives.

I ask my colleagues to join me in the bill that I introduced last week, the Child Handgun Injury Prevention Act, H.R. 1014. It requires manufacturers' safety devices.

We introduced it in another bill that requires training to entitle you to have licenses. H.R. 1014 requires the Secretary of Treasury to mandate all newly manufactured handguns come equipped with child safety devices, and it would establish a Federal standard for the devices.

We can do nothing less than to ensure the future safety of our children and prevent them from unintentional handgun injury. We need to require safety devices that meet the rigid tests by the Department of Treasury.

I encourage each Member of the House of Representatives to join me in this effort.